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Agenda item 6

REPORT ON OTHER MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Contribution submitted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the attached contribution from UNESCO which was adopted at the International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy held from 8-11 March 1993 by UNESCO, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. The Congress adopted a World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy which presents possible strategies for disseminating information about human rights in a changing world.

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EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

The International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy was called in Montreal (Canada) from March 8 to 11, 1993, by UNESCO and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, in collaboration with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

1. It reaffirms the responsibility incumbent on all peoples, states, individuals and every organ of society to achieve, through education and teaching, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Constitution of UNESCO, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the universal international human rights and humanitarian law instruments.

2. It states that:

   - democratic values are required for the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and hence education for human rights and democracy should receive special attention;
   - education for human rights and democracy is itself a human right and is a pre-requisite to the full realization of social justice, peace and development. The exercise of such a right would contribute to safeguarding democracy and to development in its comprehensive meaning;
   - education for human rights and democracy would lay a solid basis for guaranteeing human rights and preventing their violations;
   - the educational process should be itself a democratic and participatory process that empower people and the civil society to improve the quality of life.

3. In spite of major progress achieved in the field of education and that of human rights, serious efforts still need to be made to overcome obstacles and prevent shortcomings and to meet new challenges. Therefore, the Congress emphasizes the responsibility of the international community, the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies, in particular UNESCO, to initiate and support educational programmes and activities relevant to human rights and democracy.

THUS, the Montreal International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy:

Adopts the attached World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy.

Recommends to the Director-General of UNESCO to bring the World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy to the attention of the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, Austria, June 1993).

Urges the Director-General of UNESCO to invite all States to guarantee full protection of individuals and organizations working in the field of human rights education.

WORLD PLAN OF ACTION ON

EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

INTRODUCTION

WHO?

This World Plan of Action is addressed, among others, to:

individuals, families, groups and communities, educators, teaching institutions and their boards, the media, employers and unions, popular movements, political parties, parlementarians, public officials, national and international non-governmental organizations, all multilateral and intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations Organization, in particular its Centre for Human Rights, specialized institutions of the United Nations system, in particular UNESCO, and States.

The advocates of this Plan come from all sectors of society. It is addressed to victims of human rights violations and defenders of human rights and democracy as well as decision-makers.

The Plan depends on all actors including grassroots education workers in villages, refugee camps, barrios, inner cities and war zones around the world. The Plan is not a comprehensive strategy for formal and informal education. It is rather a framework of action which will be tailored and executed by various participants. They are better qualified to adjust the implementation of the Plan in accordance with their priorities, resources and particular circumstances.

The Plan conceives of education in its broadest sense, among all age, gender, class, ethnic, national, religious and linguistic groups and in all sectors of society. It takes a global view of education, developing strategies for learning in formal and non-formal settings and including popular and adult education, education in the family, out-of-school education of youth, education of specialized groups and education in difficult situations.

WHAT?

The Plan of Action calls for a global mobilization of energies and resources, from the family to the United Nations level, to educate individuals and groups about human rights so that conduct which leads to a denial of rights will be altered, all rights will be respected and civil society will be transformed into a peaceful and participatory model. Learning is not an end in itself but rather the means of eliminating human rights violations and building a culture of peace based on democracy, development, tolerance and mutual respect.

The Plan is based on the body of international human rights and humanitarian law. Human rights are seen in this Plan as universal and indivisible.

As a forward-looking strategy this Plan builds on, among other things, the 1974 "Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" and the recommendations which emerged from the two previous UNESCO International Congresses on Human Rights Education, in Vienna in 1978 and in Malta in 1987, and the Forum on Education for Democracy, in Tunis in December 1992.

The Plan conceives of human rights in their broadest sense so that it can include **inter alia** learning about tolerance, solidarity, participatory citizenship and the importance of building mutual respect and understanding.

WHY?

The context of the Plan of Action must be seen as one of alarm and urgency. Certainly, the Cold War has come to a close, walls have come down and a few dictators have vanished. Yet the last decade of the Twentieth century is experiencing the recurrence of the most serious human rights violations, caused by the rise of nationalism, racism, xenophobia, sexism and religious intolerance. These trends have led to the most abhorrent forms of ethnic cleansing including the systematic rape of women, exploitation, neglect and abuse of children and concerted violence against foreigners, refugees, displaced persons, minorities, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups.

Notwithstanding the elimination of authoritarian regimes and the formation of emerging democracies worldwide over the last 40 years, new forms of autocracy are emerging. An alarming rise of racism, extremisms and religious fanaticism and the dangerous instability of some post-authoritarian states are noted. No less

disturbing are the threats to rights stemming from environmental degradation, from the new science of biogenetics, and from the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

Education for human rights in a changing world is the thrust of this Plan of Action. It should be participatory and operational at all levels of civil society, creative, innovative and empowering. The rise of nationalism and intolerance mentioned above calls for special and anticipatory educational strategies aimed at preventing the outbreak of violent conflicts and human rights violations related to it. Incremental change can no longer be considered satisfactory. Education as such should aim to nurture democratic values, sustain impulses for democratization and promote societal transformation based upon human rights and democracy.

The Plan of Action takes into consideration the development of human rights norms at the international and other levels, and the establishment of mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights at national, regional and international levels.

A key challenge for the future is to enhance the universality of human rights by rooting these rights in different cultural traditions. The enjoyment of human rights is also contingent upon a degree of responsibility towards the community.

WHEN?

The World Plan of Action is intended to commence immediately, working toward particular measurable objectives within a specific time-table laid down by the participants in the Plan. The observation of the Fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Organization in 1995 and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998 can serve as the focus of activities, programmes and projects in human rights education and occasions for their assessment and dissemination. A series of events for sharing experiences and assessing results should be organized from local communities up to and including the global level. Such sharing and assessment to be subject to a general overall end of decade review toward planning on-going activities and programmes for the Twenty-first century.

HOW?

In order for this Plan to succeed, the active participation of individual states, wherever possible, is essential. The state should commit itself to defined targets for human rights education and awareness within governmental structures and institutions. The state should provide funding for initiatives generated nationally.

The state will participate in the human rights education initiative as a crucial part of its either new or ongoing will to build a democratic society. In the future, the quality of the means put in place to implement the human rights education initiative could become a way to assess the political will either now or long term stated to build a sustainable democratic society. In this context, it is important for states to accede to all human rights instruments.

The United Nations system and in particular UNESCO and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, a number of governmental and international governmental and non-governmental organizations have already begun to work in the area of education for human rights and democracy. Their work should be considered an important part for the implementation of this Plan, both as a point of departure and also a source of ideas, materials, experience and insight. Such work should be intensified. In particular, more emphasis should be given to projects for education for human rights and democracy under the United Nations Programme of Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the Field of Human Rights. In this context this Plan could provide a frame for improved coordination of programmes of human rights education and democracy.

The details of the Plan of Action depend on how different players would participate and take responsibility for different aspects of the Plan.

The following seven major strategies are proposed:

1. The development and distribution by UNESCO of a **standard form for planning, implementation and assessment.** This will assist governmental and non-governmental organizations in the projection, coordination and review of various programmes, projects and activities to achieve the objectives of this World Plan of Action. UNESCO would keep a register of all initiatives undertaken in this framework on the basis of communications sent by the participants.

2. The development of active **national, regional and international networks** to produce material, curricula and programmes as well as to exchange methods and materials and develop "best-practice" approaches;

3. The accessibility **up-to-date information and documentation** and the availability of practical and inexpensive teaching materials;

4. The convening of regional and global **momentum-building conferences;**

5. The strengthening of the **United Nations Voluntary Fund for Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the Field of Human Rights** and of the **UNESCO Voluntary Fund for the Development of the Knowledge of Human Rights through Education and Information** so that they can better support human rights education, information and documentation projects worldwide, including those of non-governmental organizations, as well as encouraging funding of such projects by other **public and private funding institutions and sources**;

6. The emphasis on the right to education and in particular human rights education by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and its monitoring mechanisms, the regional human rights commissions, as well as the expert organs supervising the international human rights treaties, in particular the Committee on the Rights of the Child;.

7. **A follow-up committee** to be created by UNESCO in consultation with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights will disseminate the Plan, receive relevant communications, follow-up and monitor the implementation of the Plan.

The Plan emphasizes that learning is intended to encompass the concepts that knowledge must lead to action, that access to knowledge should be empowering, that learning is a participatory process and that the learner is also the teacher and vice versa.

The methodology of education for human rights and democracy should be respectful of the rights of the learner and democratic in its organization and process.

This Plan calls for methods which reach the widest number of individuals most effectively, such as the use of the mass media, the training of trainers and mobilizing popular movements and the possibility of establishing a worldwide television and radio network under the auspices of the United Nations.

OBJECTIVES

The Plan strives to:

1. make information available about human rights norms, national, regional and international instruments relevant to human rights and mechanisms at all levels to redress violations. Special focus should be on efforts to reach young people;

2. encourage educators to assist learners to understand the connections between economic conditions and access to rights and to support strategies for change that are non-violent and democratic;

3. increase the awareness of educators in all sectors and at all levels of the benefits of co-operation and co-ordination through networking and to assist them in building human rights education networks;

4. encourage governments and the international community to provide and foster a culture of peace based on human rights;

5. to make human rights and the national, regional and international instruments that guarantee such rights more widely known.

MAIN LINES OF ACTION

The ultimate purpose of the Plan is to create a culture of human rights and to develop democratic societies that enable individuals and groups to solve their disagreements and conflicts by the use of non-violent methods.

The challenge of making education for human rights and democracy effective and comprehensive worldwide will require:

1. The identification of the most appropriate target groups so as to ensure rapid and effective implementation.

2. A focus on educational support where it is most needed and most empowering, making sure projects fit potential users.

3. The encouragement and development of initiatives which mobilize people and which utilize innovative methodology.

4. The process of developing and delivering human rights education and training must be viewed in itself as an exercise in democracy in keeping with the participation of target groups. This can be done by practicing the principle of equality and by developing participatory and inclusive learning contexts and curricula, genuinely responsive to the real needs of people. Educational processes and methodologies must be models for what the plan wishes to achieve in society as a whole. It is also imperative that learning programmes include approaches which assist people to understand and analyse their relations with power and leadership styles and abuses.

5. The development of pedagogic research into the various aspects of education for human rights and democracy, taking account especially of present changes.

6. The systematic revision of school textbooks with a view to eliminating xenophobic, racist, sexist and other stereotypes.

7. The building of practical relationships/networks among individuals, educators, groups and institutions in particular through meetings and bilateral and multilateral collaboration.

8. The strengthening of the commitment to identify and increase at national, regional and international levels, resources for education for human rights and democracy. It is essential also that the action of NGOs is not impeded.

9. Special attention should be given to the design of cost-effective and sustainable educational programmes.

10. A global commitment to increase resources for education for human rights and democracy as well as earmarking funds in development projects for this purpose.

LEVELS OF ACTION

The following levels of action should be emphasized:

Teaching Human Rights and Democracy in the Curricula at All Levels of the School System

Aim: To build an integral and broad-based curriculum that is pervasive across subject disciplines, so that rights and democracy education is a separate subject which is dealt with repeatedly throughout a person's basic education. The theme of rights, responsibilities and democratic processes should also be woven into all or most topics of study and included in school life values and in the process of socialization.

The focus should be on:

i) pre-primary
ii) primary
iii) secondary and vocational training
iv) post-secondary - colleges and universities
v) teacher training/education
vi) teachers' organizations and unions
vii) school boards and other levels of education administration
viii) parents' organizations.

Education for Human Rights and Democracy in a Non-formal Setting

Aims: To involve groups of adults and young people, including those not attending school, in out-of-school education, through their families, their professional associations, workplaces, institutions, groupings, etc..

To avoid exclusion, programmes will conscientize all organized and unorganized groups to their rights and to their responsibilities and to participate fully throughout society. Special attention will be given to reach all women whatever their current level of participation in public life.

To achieve this aim, special attention should be given to education for human rights and democracy to certain groups including:

i) workplace (unions, employers)
ii) professional associations
iii) religious and cultural organizations
iv) youth, including through leisure and sports clubs
v) UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations

vi) groups which are less exposed to public life (for example, people living in rural or remote areas)
vii) groups working specifically on literacy, advocacy and assisting those living in extreme poverty
viii) security, army, police and prison personnel, etc.
ix) public officials and decision-makers
x) judges and lawyers and others working in the administration of justice
xi) media personnel
xii) medical doctors, health professionals and scientists including those engaged in biological research.

Education for Human Rights and Democracy in Difficult Situations

Aim: To direct efforts to provide appropriate information and education to people in difficult situations where rights are endangered.

In addition to the proposed objectives in (1) and (2) above, attention should be paid to vulnerable groups as well as to potential and actual violators with a view to preventing abuses and to protecting the former. The level of intervention for education and protection called for, will depend on:

A. The type of situation, such as

1. Armed conflicts of either an international or non-international character
2. Internal tension, unrest, uprisings and state of emergency
3. Periods of transition from dictatorship to democracy or of threats to democracy
4. Natural disasters
5. Foreign occupation.

B. The needs of specific groups, such as

1. Women,
2. Children,
3. Indigenous peoples,
4. Refugees and internally displaced persons,
5. Political prisoners.
6. Minorities
7. Migrant workers
8. Persons with HIV/AIDS.

It is to be noted that the early adoption of the United Nations Draft declaration relating to the rights and responsibilities of individuals and human rights ~~defenders~~ would be a major contribution.

RESEARCH, INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Given the essential role of research, information and documentation for the Plan of Action, and the United Nations Public Information Campaign for Human Rights, a major effort should be directed towards diversifying information resources, documentation and teaching/learning materials directed to meet the practical needs of teaching and training at different levels and for different audiences. It is equally important to strengthen existing national, regional and international information networks, to help build new ones where necessary and also to encourage the creation of local information/documentation centres so that suitable materials are collected and skills developed in gathering information and documentation through:

i) ~~cheap~~ and easy access to up-to-date information,
ii) simple computerization and search systems,
iii) identification, creation and strengthening of national, regional and international research centres and clearing houses on human rights information,
iv) encouraging south/south, east/west and north/south sharing of information, serving both educators and documentalists on human rights, coordinated by a non-governmental organization active in the field of information;
v) protection and security of information gathered by fact-finding missions, human rights education projects, etc.,
vi) development of human rights media other than printed material including audio-visuals, transparencies, music, games, toys and other forms appropriate for reaching non-literate people and children. Emphasis should be given to assure the availability of such material in local languages;
vii) support for research based on a global view of human rights, taking into account its close interdependence with development, democracy and environment.

The role of UNESCO is of particular importance in relation to the best use and distribution of information, documentation and materials and enhancing the quality of publications in the area of human rights education. Such activities would require among other things the strengthening of the infrastructural capacity of UNESCO, working in close co-operation with other documentation and information centres including those of the United Nations system.

OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME

It is to be noted, in particular, that the success of the Plan depends on the understanding that planning at all levels must appropriately confront problems such as:

i) the absence of political will of certain partners,
ii) the dangers of marginalization of the process internationally as well as intranationally,
iii) the absence of target group involvement in the development of material, processes and policies,
iv) the potential use of unsuitable methodologies,
v) the lack of training of many participants,
vi) the insufficiency of co-ordination and co-operation between the national, regional and international levels,
vii) the occasional tendency to confine human rights education within the legal profession,
viii) the lack of a multidisciplinary approach,
ix) the resistance to change provoked by new relationships based on human rights.

CONCLUSION

The challenge facing the World Plan of Action for Education on Human Rights and Democracy is to translate human rights, democracy and concepts of peace, of sustainable development and of international solidarity into social norms and behaviour. This is humanity's challenge: to build a peaceful, democratic, prosperous and just world. Constant active education and learning is needed to meet such a challenge.

It is hoped that this Plan of Action will be implemented by committed nations, individuals, groups, every organ of society, and the international community at large, to ensure its full success for the sake of present and future generations.